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President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 38 ***(continued)***

The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/556, A/49/636)

Mr. Phanit (Thailand): Thailand has been following developments in the Middle East with keen interest. During the past few years, and particularly the past year, we have been happy to witness the peace process gaining momentum across the entire region. Parties to the various conflicts have shown great resolve to settle their differences through peaceful means. Diplomacy and dialogue have replaced threats and the use of force. However, more mutual accommodation continues to be required before a lasting peace can be ensured.

One example of what I have just said is the current situation in Palestine and the Gaza Strip. Over the past years, events in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank have been encouraging and have strengthened the fabric of peace in the Middle East. A series of historic events have taken place one after the other. The conclusion of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities in Cairo this August has set in motion the tangible implementation process of the much-heralded Declaration of Principles signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993.

As we speak, Palestinians, for the first time in decades, are experiencing self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, though not without serious difficulties. Nevertheless, it can be said that Palestinians are now in control of their own affairs: education, health care, tax collection, social services and tourism. These developments represent important building-blocks of a structure for a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

We are equally encouraged to see that the foundation of peace has been extended and strengthened in yet another historic agreement between the State of Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan. A state of war no longer exists between those two countries. In its place, they have agreed to establish good-neighbourly relations. The peace process continues to gain momentum. Another historic event appears to be on the horizon. Israel and Syria have demonstrated that there is a strong desire to negotiate and reconcile their long-held and bitter differences. Such a peace process requires nurturing through the resolve and the commitment of all the States in the region. It requires a political climate that will safeguard the gains that have already been achieved. The goodwill of the international community is also an important component of this process.

For these reasons, my delegation welcomes the recent statement of the Gulf Cooperation Council declaring an end to economic sanctions imposed on countries which maintain trade relations with Israel. The restoration of diplomatic relations between countries in

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the Gulf and Israel is also actively being explored. This is based on the enlightened self-interest of the leaders and the nations concerned. It will serve to advance the interests of peace and security in the Middle East.

Here, at the current session of the General Assembly, we have noted with satisfaction the prevailing spirit of compromise as we consider issues relating to the Middle East. Let me highlight a few of them. In the First Committee, a consensus was achieved on the draft resolution calling for the establishment of the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone for the second consecutive year. In the Fourth Committee, opposition has been replaced by a spirit of cooperation, particularly on how to help the Palestinians overcome the initial obstacles in their return to self-rule. Here in the plenary of the General Assembly, it is my delegation's hope that the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people will achieve a consensus again this year.

The prevailing spirit of compromise fosters mutual trust and confidence among the parties concerned which, in turn, will have a salutary effect on the efforts to accelerate the peace process in the region itself. But while there have been encouraging developments, there have also been serious obstacles placed in the path of the peace process. Acts of violence have been committed by those who harbour ill designs on the peace and reconciliation process among the parties concerned. The recent troubles and bloodshed in the Gaza Strip under Palestinian self-rule clearly demonstrate that the situation remains fragile. Half a century of conflict and occupation have clearly taken their toll on the Palestinian people. Living conditions have been harsh. The social fabric has been adversely affected. Economic deprivation has been extensive.

Positive developments have inevitably raised Palestinian expectations. My delegation commends the demonstration of patience and far-sightedness by all sides in the recent unrest. The international community should not let the Palestinians struggle alone. The international community must work together with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the support and promotion of economic and social development in the occupied territories are sustained. This is the only way to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinians. It is a basis for ensuring the initial fulfilment of a long process of successful self-rule itself.

The appointment of Mr. Terje Rod Larsen as the Special Coordinator of the United Nations to the occupied territories is significant and timely. His role in liaising with the Palestinian Authority, as well as in overseeing the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in the occupied territories should contribute substantively to improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people. My delegation notes with satisfaction that participants in the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, convened in Washington in October 1993, pledged $2.4 billion in economic assistance to the occupied territories for the five-year transition period. We must see to it that the pledges are realized.

For our part, the Royal Thai Government attaches great importance to the activities of United Nations agencies in providing day-to-day assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories. We are pleased to be among that who have consistently made financial contributions to UNRWA. We will continue to do so.

The welfare of the Palestinians has been of great concern to the countries in South-East Asia and has been accorded priority on the agenda of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers. At their meeting in Bangkok last July, they issued a Joint Communiqué which, among other things, stated the following:

> "The Foreign Ministers welcomed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 13 September 1993 and the Cairo Agreement of 4 May 1994 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). They urged the international community to provide the Palestinian Authority with the necessary financial resources for the successful implementation of the agreements. They also urged Israel and the other parties directly involved in the Middle East question to intensify their engagement in the peace process to achieve an expeditious, just and peaceful settlement."

Thailand will continue to follow the situation in the Middle East with great interest. We wish to reaffirm our support for a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions. We also hope that the international community will maintain its resolve in supporting and

nurturing the ongoing efforts, until a just and durable peace is obtained in this region of the world.

Mr. Owada (Japan): During this past year, we have witnessed historic progress in efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It is clear that the collapse of the cold war world order has had a significant impact on this region as well, to the extent that the region had come to be afflicted, in both political and economic contexts, by the confrontation between East and West from the beginning of the tragic course of events that commenced immediately after the conclusion of the Second World War. Under such circumstances, the dramatic change in the international environment brought about by the demise of the cold war has come to present the countries of the region and the international community with an historic new situation which is at once a challenge and an opportunity.

The most recent and dramatic achievement in this regard, following the Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) last year, was the conclusion in October of a peace treaty by Israel and Jordan. Japan heartily welcomes this achievement and expresses its profound admiration for the courage and resolve demonstrated by the leaders of the two countries. By putting an end to the deep-rooted enmity and mistrust, Prime Minister Rabin of Israel and King Hussein of Jordan have given their peoples a historic hope and expectation for a genuine, stable and prosperous future built on cooperative relations.

Now the international community must focus on the negotiations between Syria and Israel, which are the key to achieving a durable peace throughout the region. Indeed, peace in the Middle East will not take a firm hold unless Syria and Israel agree to embark upon a new course of reconciliation and cooperation. In view of Syria's geopolitical importance, its *rapprochement* with Israel could broaden the circle of Arab States willing to embrace peace, and instil confidence in the countries and peoples throughout the region that peace will in fact prevail and endure all over the region.

Naturally, it would be too optimistic to expect that a breakthrough or rapid progress along this track could be easily achieved, since there still remains a good deal of hard bargaining between the two parties on such issues as withdrawal from the Golan, the security measures that will be required and the normalization of diplomatic and economic relations. Nevertheless, both Israel and Syria understand that the tide has turned towards peace; they are serious about building a Middle East in which Arabs and Israelis can live side by side and cooperate for their mutual benefit.

In addition to these bilateral negotiations, multilateral talks on issues of common interest to the people of the region are also extremely significant. These talks are an integral part of the peace process and are meant to prepare for the changes that will continue to reshape the Middle East while fostering a spirit of cooperation and confidence among the parties concerned.

Japan has been actively participating in the peace process through working closely with the regional parties as the lead organizer of the Working Group on environment and as the co-organizer of the Working Groups on regional economic development and on water resources.

A significant development that took place in the context of the environmental Working Group was its adoption of the code of conduct in the field of the environment at its meeting held in Bahrain in October this year. Since the Middle East consists of a number of regional parties that have to live together in a relatively small area, it is extremely important for them to share a common code of conduct and common objectives in the field of environmental conservation.

Tourism is another area of promising potential for the region to cultivate. It is an area in which Japan has been working closely with other interested parties within the regional economic development Working Group. No one can doubt the rich historical legacies and touristic resources in that region. Consequently, there have been vigorous discussions on how to develop a regional training centre for tourism, an improved touristic infrastructure, joint marketing, and a regional institution for cooperation.

Having spoken about all these felicitous developments, we must not lose sight of the fact that there are those who are working to undermine the peace process, even as we celebrate the progress that continues to be made.

The recent wave of terrorist acts both inside and outside Israel is principally aimed at destroying the political will of the Israeli and Arab leaders and the peaceful aspirations of all the peoples of the Middle East. The enemies of peace must not be permitted to succeed. The international community must stand against terror as

firmly as it stands for peace. Japan stresses the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation in taking effective measures to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of terrorism.

The peace and security of the Gulf region is another concern. Iraq, which has the potential to play a decisive role in the Gulf, should be regarded as a key to the peace and stability of the region. This past October Iraq once again alarmed the world by moving its elite troops southward to the Kuwaiti border. Whatever its intentions might have been, the fact is that this sudden military action by Iraq reminded many in the world of the crisis of a few years ago, when the stability of the Gulf region as a whole came to be threatened. Fortunately, the international community this time again acted swiftly and appropriately. It was fortunate that through such decisive and concerted international action the possibility of a recurrence of the tragic 1990 Gulf crisis was averted.

In this connection, it should be noted that the Government of Iraq recently took a decision to recognize the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the State of Kuwait. Japan, in agreement with the view expressed in the statement of the President of the Security Council on 16 November, recognizes this decision as a significant step in the right direction towards full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is hoped that the Iraqi authorities will take further steps to respond to the will of the international community, as reflected in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

At present the Middle East is faced with a unique historic opportunity. Within the context of the structural transformation now taking place in the international system in the post-cold-war era, it has a chance, not to be missed, to achieve durable peace, stability and prosperity. This we can do if we succeed in joining forces in an all-out effort to consolidate mutual confidence and interdependence and promote a new regional partnership. Japan wishes to be an integral part of this international effort to effect such historic change. It pledges its full cooperation in working to that end with all the parties concerned.

Mr. Abu Odeh (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Three weeks ago today, my country, Jordan, and Israel exchanged the instruments of ratification of the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty, thus crowning a three-year effort of bilateral negotiations within the framework of the Madrid Conference. In this regard, and in addition to the feelings of satisfaction at what has been achieved, one must highlight the fact that the Peace Treaty concluded by the two parties is in full conformity with the principles and provisions of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which formed the basis of the negotiations according to the Madrid terms of reference. The treaty is also a faithful translation into reality of the land-for-peace formula. Accordingly, the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty can be considered the first full fruit of the Madrid Conference, as it is the first Peace Treaty to result from the Madrid Conference. Under the Treaty, Jordan has recovered its full sovereignty over its territory that was under occupation and has committed itself, together with Israel, to building a firmly rooted strongly founded peace that encompasses all areas of transaction and interaction between the two neighbouring States whose wish is to coexist and cooperate in a climate of security and stability. The desired peace as provided for in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) was described as just and durable, that is to say, it has to be equitable and lasting.

One must note that the Security Council members who drafted the resolution at the time, put justice before durability. They were quite right. History teaches us that peace cannot last if it carries within it the seeds of inequity and injustice. The fact that the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty is characterized by justice, ensures that the peace based upon it will be durable and that it will be strengthened by the achievement of comprehensive peace and interaction, cooperation and joint action by Governments and peoples.

However, the Middle East conflict, as is well-known, has its own specific nature which arises from its origins and dynamics.

As for the origins of the conflict, it started between two emerging nationalist movements that clashed over one land, that of Palestine, which was then under the control of a third party. The conflict quickly evolved, due to external and internal factors, to the point where it became, in 1948, an international dispute that was focused primarily on protecting the rights of the Palestinian Arab people and the rejection of the establishment of a State for the Jews in Palestine. After the 1967 war, it developed further with the emergence of the Palestine Liberation Organization as a new active party representing the Palestinian people in the conflict — a conflict which now focused on bringing about a full Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories which Israel occupied by war, and on restoring the national rights of the Palestinian people. Thus, the parties to the conflict

increased in number and the objectives of the adversaries changed with the implicit recognition of Israel by the Arab States in their acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Since the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the situation in the Middle East took its place alongside the question of Palestine on the agenda of the General Assembly. As a result of the continued state of war between the Arab States and Israel and the outbreak of several wars at various times, new issues emerged other than those related to occupation, the national rights of the Palestinian people and security. Among the most important of those issues, of which Arab Jerusalem is the most significant, are those of the refugees and displaced persons, the settlements, water, the rights of Palestinians to self-determination and the occupation of southern Lebanon. All of these issues have been considered by the United Nations, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly and appropriate resolutions have been adopted thereon on the basis of international legality. It was in this context that the Arab-Israeli conflict acquired the complexity that resulted from its long duration, the multiplicity of the parties involved in it and the multiformity of its manifestations.

These facts did not escape the architects of the framework of the peace negotiations or the co-sponsors of the Madrid Conference. Hence their emphasis on the need for a comprehensive peace. Consequently, the desired peace that would put an end to this conflict came to be characterized not only by justice and durability, but also by comprehensiveness, that is to say, it must be an equitable, lasting and all-embracing peace. The achievement of such a comprehensive peace means that all parties should arrive at and conclude peace treaties that deal with all the problems, both those that caused the conflict initially and those that arose from it. In this context, the Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty is a significant contribution towards the achievements of the comprehensive peace which both the negotiating parties and the international community are committed to achieve.

Proceeding from this, failure by Israel or by any other Arab party to arrive at a peace treaty, or any dereliction of the duty to find a just solution to any problem that relates to the conflict, such as the issues of refugees and displaced persons, Arab Jerusalem, the settlements, water, the right to self-determination and southern Lebanon, will be tantamount to planting a germ of conflict in the soil, side by side with the seeds of peace, a germ that will bide its time and, at any inauspicious moment, flower forth to destroy the seeds of peace and endanger all that has been achieved.

Jordan, as party to the conflict until 14 September 1993, the date of its signing of the joint agenda with Israel, and as a partner in peace-building since that date, has achieved, together with Israel, a successful experiment by concluding a Peace Treaty on 26 October 1994. Primarily, this success may be attributed to the commitment of both parties to Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and the land-for-peace formula as well as to the trust that both sides were able to engender in the course of their negotiations — trust that has been built on the goodwill demonstrated by both parties, as exemplified by the following:

1. The public appearance of His Highness Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, in the presence of President Clinton at the White House on 1 October 1993;

2. Agreement by the Jordanian and Israeli sides to move the negotiations from Washington to the region;

3. Agreement by the parties to form sub-committees of negotiators to discuss and conduct joint studies on mutually beneficial projects, should peace be achieved. Both sides thus engaged in a kind of joint action, even if it was theoretical, while continuing to negotiate;

4. The fact that talks between the parties, alternately, in Jordan and in Israel;

5. The Washington Declaration, signed by His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel at a public ceremony that was broadcast live by the media to the whole world. In that declaration, the two parties agreed to end the state of war that had existed between them;

6. The opening of the first land crossing since 1948 between the Jordanian and Israeli ports of Aqaba and Eilat, on the Gulf of Aqaba, for nationals of third States;

7. The connection of the Jordanian and Israeli telephone networks for the first time since 1948. Citizens of both countries now use those lines for contacts by telephone.

However, my country, which concluded a Peace Treaty with Israel on 26 October 1994, wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the achievement of comprehensive peace and looks forward to the conclusion by the other parties of peace treaties that would solve all the problems relating to the conflict at the very earliest,

and thus achieve the just and comprehensive solution aspired after by the international community as represented by the United Nations. The peace map, as it exists today, shows that two States only, namely Egypt and Jordan, have signed Peace Treaties with Israel. As for the Palestine Liberation Organization, it is in the process of negotiating peace with Israel within the framework of the Declaration of Principles reached by the two sides in Oslo.

As for Syria and Lebanon, both countries continue to negotiate individually with Israel in an attempt to reach a peace agreement, while the co-sponsors of the Madrid conference remain committed to achieving a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We hope that sincere and concerted efforts will be made to ensure success on the Syrian-Israeli and the Lebanese-Israeli tracks, for unless Israel arrives at and concludes peace treaties with Syria and Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and of the land-for-peace formula which was fully respected in concluding the Egyptian-Israeli and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaties — the desired comprehensive peace will not be achieved and all that has been accomplished so far will remain blurred and incomplete.

In addition to the tangible problems on which United Nations resolutions have been adopted, there are intangible problems, including the psychological legacy inherited by the peoples, who, for many decades, have suffered the consequences of the Middle East conflict. I call this a problem because the Middle East conflict has for generations caused the peoples of the region much pain, suffering, frustration and many deep suspicions, which have resulted in attitudes and impressions that do not make it easy for those people to move from a state of alienation, apprehension and suspicion to a state of peaceful interaction based on mutual confidence. The peace documents signed by leaders will not be sufficient by themselves to bring about the required transformation. As His Majesty King Hussein said in his speech before the United States Congress on 26 July 1994:

> "It should never be forgotten that peace resides ultimately not in the hands of Governments but in the hands of the people. For unless peace can be made real to the men, women and children of the Middle East, the best efforts of negotiators will come to nought."

It is the broad masses who consolidate peace, but these masses do not deal with peace nor understand it in mere abstract terms. They view peace through its tangible dividends.

Therefore, my delegation believes that the United Nations, the provider of the terms of reference for the negotiators and the embodiment of international legality through its numerous resolutions relating to the Middle East conflict, could play another role in this area. Its Members could take the initiative to help the parties to peace raise the standard of living of their peoples, and it should expand and increase the various United Nations programmes operating in those countries, including mine. Experience has shown that when a just peace that is free of any seeds of conflict is achieved, it will always need — especially at the beginning — power to protect it, money to finance it and statesmen to administer it.

Consequently, my delegation looks forward to the adoption by the General Assembly of an appropriate resolution reflecting what has been achieved and stressing the need for supporting the parties involved in the peace process, especially Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority, not only at the moral level but also at the financial and developmental levels, for peace will not be achieved nor protected by praise and talk alone. The faltering progress of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho demonstrates that conclusively indeed.

Proceeding from this, my delegation is pleased to announce its support for the goal of the Casablanca summit for the development of the Middle East and the North African region, in which Jordan participated with a high-level delegation headed by His Highness Crown Prince Hassan. It is also my delegation's pleasure to reiterate, in this context, Jordan's announcement that it will host the forthcoming summit conference in Amman to conclude the discussion of all the issues and ideas raised at the first summit conference, which was presided over by His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco.

Mr. Haidri (Pakistan) (interpretation from Arabic):

"O mankind! We created
You from a single pain
Of male and female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
You may know each other
(Not that you may despise
Each other). Verily,
The most honoured of you

In the sight of God
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of You."

(Suza XLIX, verse 13)

The past few months have witnessed significant developments towards the peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict. Today, this vitally important region stands at a crossroads. The peoples of the Middle East have demonstrated a serious commitment to achieving a peaceful settlement to their long-festering problems by forswearing the path of conflict and recrimination and making an earnest effort to promote peace and understanding amongst themselves through dialogue.

The Government of Pakistan has followed with deep concern and with keen interest the situation in the occupied Arab territories since the beginning of the crisis. The recent accords and agreements arrived at between the parties involved constitute a first step towards the achievement of a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We fully share the conviction that the peace process should lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. We earnestly hope that the final settlement will include the withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif. Moreover, we hope it will be a settlement that addresses all aspects of the Middle East problem, including the return of the refugees.

Pakistan's support for the just struggle of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable rights is well known. We have consistently supported Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for the resolution of the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Therefore, it has always been assumed that a solution to the Palestinian problem would pave the way for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. My delegation welcomes the fact that, in tandem with progress on the Palestinian issue, there has been significant movement towards a solution of the problems between Israel and Jordan. In this context, we note with satisfaction the conclusion of the Washington Declaration of July 1994 and the Treaty of Peace of October 1994 between the Governments of Jordan and Israel. We sincerely hope that there will soon be similar progress towards resolution of the conflict on the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese tracks.

If a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East is to be achieved, it is imperative that there be simultaneous success on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. We fully share the view that unless these fundamental issues are adequately addressed, peace will continue to elude the region.

It is of the utmost importance to maintain the momentum that has been engendered in the negotiating process. We share the international community's expectation that there should be no delay in the implementation of the agreements that have been reached so far. Moreover, the provisions of these agreements must be complied with in both letter and spirit. We urge all the parties concerned to demonstrate the necessary flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the vision of lasting peace in the Middle East.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies can make a valuable and positive contribution to the expansion of the scope of assistance to the Palestinian people. They have a special responsibility to help to build the socio-economic infrastructure and national institutions that are a prerequisite of the attainment of peace and prosperity in the Middle East. In this context, my delegation welcomes the important and timely steps taken by the United Nations Secretary-General — in particular the appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to act as the focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territory.

The crucial link between the political process and the socio-economic dimension of the problem must not be neglected. This link is vitally important for the achievement of lasting stability in the region. The Paris accord of April 1994 was a reflection of the international community's resolve to assist the parties to achieve this objective.

Pakistan, for its part, is willing to contribute to the achievement of a lasting peace in the region on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements between the parties concerned. We are also prepared to participate in national reconstruction efforts. Our ties with the peoples of the Middle East region are

deep-rooted. Pakistan looks forward to further reinforcing these natural links of common history.

Today, in the Middle East, there is a strong yearning for peace that surpasses anything that was known in the past. It is therefore essential to ensure that the region does not lapse into another period of strife and instability. The international community should seize this historic opportunity to ensure the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Although time has marched on and we are nearing the beginning of the fourth year since the holding of the Madrid Conference on peace in the Middle East, the recent peace talks and the accompanying international efforts have not helped the peace process to progress towards the desired target of establishing a genuine comprehensive peace based on full and faithful implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the land-for-peace principle.

The peace initiative of the United States, to which Syria responded, proceeded from clear foundations, which led to the holding of the Madrid Conference. Those foundations are the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978); land for peace; and the achievement of comprehensive and just solutions on all negotiating tracks.

Mr. Ansari (India), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It should be recalled here that during the Washington peace talks, Syria was the party that was most interested in dealing with the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This proceeded from Syria's realization that any solution that does not deal with the quintessential core of the conflict will be inadequate and will never lead to the desired peace. At an early stage — specifically, during the sixth round of the Washington talks — Syria submitted a working paper containing principles that was described as historic because the principles it set out opened the road to peace. Syria followed that by putting forward the principle of full withdrawal for full peace in order to advance the peace process. However, Syria's serious approach was met with Israel's attempt to avoid issues of substance in favour of issues with no bearing whatsoever on the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace.

At the Damascus summit with President Clinton, President Hafez Al-Assad reaffirmed Syria's commitment to the peace process and its earnest desire to work towards a just and comprehensive peace as a strategic option that guarantees Arab rights, ends Israel's occupation of the occupied Arab territories, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and thus enables all peoples of the region to live in peace, security and dignity. President Assad also reaffirmed to President Clinton, that Syria is prepared, on the basis of the principle of full withdrawal for full peace, to commit itself to the substantive requirements of peace by establishing normal peaceful relations with Israel in exchange for complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, and from southern Lebanon.

Hardly a day goes by without the Arab inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan reaffirming their national identity and their attachment to their motherland, regardless of the arbitrary practices of the Israeli occupation authorities and all the laws and pieces of legislation which have been enacted and which are null and void under international law.

Following its occupation of the Golan in its 1967 aggression, Israel expelled 120,000 Syrian Arab inhabitants of the Golan who sought refuge in their homeland Syria. Those people still await the opportunity to return to their homes, to recover their property and to resume their normal lives. In addition, Israel has enacted a series of laws, regulations and decrees by virtue of which the Israeli military authorities have expropriated 80 per cent of the entire land area of the occupied Arab Syrian Golan, and built 40 settlements, in addition to the many military and paramilitary settlements whose number is not known.

Complete, just and comprehensive peace cannot be achieved under continuing occupation or while new settlement plans are being carried out regardless of the illegitimate nature of such settlements or the fact that they are a major impediment to peace.

The fact that Israel continues to earmark funds for construction projects in the occupied Syrian Golan is certainly not a positive sign that indicates any Israeli cooperation with or effective response to the United States endeavours to find a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the situation in the region. Since the United States initiative, Syria has made every possible effort to present Israel with a united front on the basis of clear principles and a position based on continuing coordination between all the parties to the peace process, thus preventing Israel from circumventing the principles

of the Madrid conference and Security Council resolutions governing the peace process. None the less, the ranks of unity have been broken, and the parties that did so must now be accountable to their own people.

In this context, we would like to reaffirm that the close concomitance of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks will withstand all attempts to separate them. We shall insist on our firm position, based on the resolutions of international legality, in favour of a peace that would return our occupied lands and guarantee our rights and dignity. Syria's position of insisting on a just and comprehensive solution and rejecting partial piecemeal solutions, proceeds from our conviction that a just and comprehensive solution is the only viable one. Anything else is liable, at any time, to fail, regress and collapse. It has been proved that separate agreements do not bring true peace to the region. Indeed, the opposite may be true. What the region needs is genuine peace, which is impossible to achieve unless legitimate rights are completely restored in accordance with the resolutions of international legality upon which the very peace process has been founded. Thus, Syria believes that it is important for the whole region, that the peace process should continue and that negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks should lead to complete withdrawal from southern Lebanon and from the Golan Heights. That would open the road to genuine and firm peace in the region. If that objective is not achieved because of the intransigence of the Israeli position or for any other reason, we believe that what has taken place on some negotiating tracks will not lead to real stability in the region.

There is no doubt that circumventing the basic requirements of a just and comprehensive peace and preempting the ending of Israel's occupation of the Arab territories with ideas, proposals and plans that speak of economic cooperation with the Israeli occupiers will not make Israel respond to the requirements of the desired genuine peace. Indeed, it merely affords Israel the opportunity of circumventing the need to meet the requirements of a just and comprehensive peace and encourages it to persist in its intransigent positions that reject the implementation of the resolutions of international legality on withdrawing from the occupied Arab territories.

The substance of the conflict never was and never will be cooperation between Israel and the Arabs. Rather, it is occupation, aggression, expansion, the acquisition of territory and the expulsion of Arab citizens. Therefore, finding a genuine solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must begin and end with putting an end to occupation, and by returning to the Arabs their lands and their usurped rights.

The peace that the Middle East needs is not the sort of peace that is based on Israeli military might. It is significant indeed that regardless of the ambience of peace, Israel has increased its military budget for next year and continues to stockpile the most modern of weapons and intransigently refuses any scrutiny of its nuclear programme — which it does not accept to place under any international supervision. The fact that Israel continues to stockpile weapons casts grave doubts on and raises many questions about what Israel intends to do with such rearmaments. The fact of the matter is that it is Israel's armament and its possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction that pose the real threat to peace in the region, now and in the future and give rise to the concern and suspicions that haunt all the region's States. The very existence of such weapons in the region, despite the peace process, will always be a threat to peace and a factor of instability and insecurity in the Middle East.

Therefore, the search for peace must be accompanied by — indeed, it must be focused as a first priority on — the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear warheads in the possession of Israel, as Israel can use these weapons at any moment, to threaten peace and undermine the sovereignty and independence of all the countries of the region.

Since the beginning of the peace process more than three years ago at Madrid, and throughout the bilateral talks in Washington, Israel has continued to focus on its own security doctrine which it links to peace and to what it calls its security requirements. Those requirements, it believes, are to be satisfied in the Arab depth and at the expense of Arabs' sovereignty over their lands. This doctrine, which differs from all accepted concepts and doctrines of security in the world, shows that it is the Arabs and not Israel that are in need of security.

Those who occupy the lands of others do not have the right to speak of security requirements. If it is the right of all parties to seek their own security, it is evident that Syria's security will be achieved, above all, by ending the occupation and establishing peace and security for all, especially when it is peace that is guaranteed by the international community. Security cannot be achieved at the expense of Arab lands and rights nor at the expense of Syria's complete sovereignty over its territory. Security arrangements cannot be set up at the expense of any one party; they must be equal and mutually beneficial, following complete withdrawal. As a matter of fact, it is the Arab side that may need much

stronger security arrangements than the Israeli side, for reasons that are known to all.

Israel has continued to mislead international public opinion by alleging that the Golan was always a source of threats to its security and by claiming that its continued occupation of the entire Golan or of certain strategic areas thereof is a necessary requirement of its security. However, if we look at the military situation in the Golan region from 1949 to 1967, it becomes crystal clear that Israel was always the party that initiated aggression against the Syrian citizens there. Proof of this is in the many Security Council resolutions that condemned those Israeli acts. These facts deflate the Israeli arguments that withdrawal from the Golan would endanger Israeli security. The issue here, as far as Israel is concerned, is not security but of the expansionist ambitions that Israel has in the Golan Heights, and they are nothing new.

Syria believes that three years after the beginning of the peace process the time has come for the United States of America to live up to its commitments, particularly now that Israel is openly playing its obstructionist role and making not inconsiderable efforts to remove any substance from the unbiased neutral American role in the peace process. It is attempting to marginalize that role and to turn the United States into a mere observer that will bless a *Pax Israeliana*, which would then perpetuate injustice, keep occupation in place and deprive the Arabs of their fundamental rights.

Syria is very keen for the international political efforts to succeed, particularly those of the United States, and is eager to see them bear fruit in the interests of the peace process. Here, we welcome once again the continuing American role and call upon the United States of America to play an even more effective role if the peace process is truly to achieve the goals for which it was initiated.

No matter how long it may last, occupation will never erase Syrian-Arab sovereignty over the Golan. This is a Syrian territory and has always been a Syrian territory. It must be returned to its legitimate owners. This has been clearly recognized and stipulated in the Security Council resolutions, in the American initiative and in the Madrid Conference formula.

At this session of the General Assembly, my delegation has submitted the annual draft resolution, which has been amended this year to differ radically from those submitted in previous years, both in substance and in form. The draft resolution was unanimously adopted by the Group of Arab States at its meeting on 8 November 1994. The draft resolution is being submitted as an Arab text. It has been shortened so that it may concentrate on essential elements of principle that must be reaffirmed, despite the use of new language thereon.

The Arab Group of States hopes that the draft resolution will achieve the widest possible support. May I conclude my statement by quoting the words of my Foreign Minister at the beginning of the session, as I believe his message should be reaffirmed anew, "Syria wants peace and realizes that all parties have a stake in this peace. It realizes also that peace has objective requirements, and it is prepared to fulfil those requirements that are agreed upon. Syria means what it says and adheres to what it means. The land-for-peace equation must be implemented in both its parts. The return of the entire Golan is not open to compromise, unjustified delay or a misplaced testing of intention. On this basis, Syria supports a genuine peace — a peace that lives and flourishes without artificial obstacles or arbitrary conditions. Putting on the peace process a greater burden than it can bear does not help to achieve peace; rather, it poses a threat to the process. The peace process should not be weighted down with issues that fall outside its framework."

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Praised be God whose wisdom decrees all that befalls us on this earth. It has been His wish, after the many calamities that followed upon one another in the Middle East and plunged its people in suffering and pain, that a glimmer of hope should emerge to promise change, tranquility and peace. That peace which first appeared as a glimmer of hope soon turned into a dream that promised to free the souls of men with its call, a call that is inspired by divine religions, a call from the depths of the past, a call for peace on earth and goodwill for all men. Therein resides the divine message, the message of wisdom and good sense.

The Madrid conference was the beginning of a breakthrough towards peace in the Middle East. Then the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization promised a dawn of hope in our region which has been ravaged by bloody conflicts, destructive wars, and dire suffering by the Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples under the yoke of Israeli occupation. After a long wait on the part of Israel, the phase of interim autonomy in Gaza and Jericho began, the Palestinian Authority assumed its responsibilities under the presidency of the Palestinian leader, Yasser

Arafat, the agreement to end the state of war between Jordan and Israel was signed, and a peace treaty between the two countries was signed in October 1994.

This succession of positive developments strengthened our hope that the Arab-Israeli conflict, one of the most violent regional conflicts the world has seen in the second half of the twentieth century was about to come to an end. This breakthrough has been made possible thanks to the determination of the international community and of our international Organizations, to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination, and to bring about Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories.

It was hoped, in the light of these positive developments on the right road towards a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, that the process would continue on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Unfortunately, the Syrian track is still beset by obstacles and difficulties. When Syria accepted the United States initiative, it did so on the strength of the United States pledge to work for a just and comprehensive peace in the region on the basis of the principles of international legality embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the land-for-peace principle. In so doing, Syria opted for participation in the peace process in order to arrive at that much desired objective of just, lasting and comprehensive peace which, it felt, was the vital requirement of all the peoples of the Middle East who aspired after peace, security and prosperity. This was the promise and that was Syria's clear response to it. However, Israel's response did not rise to the level of expectations.

It has not declared that it will withdraw completely from the Golan Heights, which it continues to occupy in contravention of the norms of international law and the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. We hope the United States will continue to use its good offices and hope that the ongoing efforts will be brought to completion. We also hope that Israel, which accepted the land-for-peace principle, will announce its intention to effect its total withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for total peace.

Lebanon occupies a special place in the context of the Middle East situation. It has been ravaged by a devastating civil war that was brought about by complex factors that arose from the region's problems. Lebanon also fell victim to a destructive Israeli invasion and to the occupation of a large part of its territory which Israel, without any legal justification or entitlement, claims to be a "security belt". Southern Lebanon has been the target of Israeli bombardment and air raids, which have brought down great suffering and destruction upon the populace.

All this took place while Security Council resolution 425 (1978) stipulated, *inter alia*, full withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon, and underscored the need to restore peace and security to the area, and to help the Lebanese Government regain its full authority over all its territory.

God help the people of southern Lebanon: Israeli raids have brought down great suffering upon them. In every street and every house there is tragedy. These are times of iniquity and intransigence, terror and fear. Cries of distress can be heard from every home, cries that will not cease until all these territories have been liberated.

Despite the pain and suffering, despite death and injury, Lebanon remains a contributor to the civilization of the world and a beacon of peace in the region: Lebanon, the fount of peace in the region; Lebanon which, in the dark of night, shines its light of peace, culture and civilizing ideas. May God save Lebanon and protect it from all evil. Whenever it suffers under attack, we feel for Lebanon, that apex of innovation and creativity. God save Lebanon, and protect it from all evil. Lebanon will always remain a generous country founded on the desire to foster all that is fine and beautiful.

Proceeding from its national responsibilities and belief in Arab partnership, Qatar supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon. It participates in reconstruction efforts in Lebanon so that it may become once again what it was in the past — a land of security, peace and prosperity and a contributor to progress.

The State of Qatar has participated actively in the peace process and has supported it from the very outset. It has welcomed all the efforts that have been made and continue to be made to ensure the success of that process. As part of our contribution to the peace process, Qatar has participated from the very beginning in the multilateral negotiations, while insisting that they must complement and not replace bilateral negotiations, and that the desired result can be reached only if the peace achieved in the region is just, lasting and comprehensive. Proceeding from this, peace in the region is achieved. That is why Qatar hosted the fifth meeting of the working group on arms control and regional security, held at

Doha from 2 to 5 May 1994, a meeting which undoubtedly helped develop concepts of arms control and the ways and means of achieving the arms reduction that is needed to consolidate regional security in the Middle East.

During the general debate at this session of the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr Al-Thani, stated my country's position on arms control and regional security in the Middle East, stressing the need to persevere in efforts to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, in the Middle East.

In pursuing its policy of supporting the peace process Qatar also supported and participated in all sincere international efforts to ensure the success of the peace process in the Middle East. It was in this context that a high-level delegation from Qatar participated in the Casablanca Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit.

While security questions are among the most vital issues facing the Middle East, security of the Gulf region remains at the forefront of such questions, because of the special importance of the Gulf region as a primary source of energy for the whole world.

As members are aware, the Gulf region was the theatre of two successive wars whose after effects continue to encumber the region with heavy burdens. This makes us aspire after a future of security, prosperity and peace for the region as a whole. That is why the State of Qatar, under the wise guidance of its Emir, His Royal Highness Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, and Crown Prince Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, has consistently participated in every effort aimed at addressing the crucial issues of our Gulf region and our Arab and Islamic nation — and has supported the striving by the Gulf Cooperation Council to serve the interests of the countries and peoples of the Gulf region of which we are an integral part and whose security is vitally linked to our own. Therefore, Qatar attaches the highest importance to the maintenance of stability in the region and to ensuring that no regional changes are imposed by force. In this context, Qatar reiterates its conviction that the maintenance of the region's security and stability requires the consolidation of cooperation amongst the Gulf states on the basis of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others, respect for international law and the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means, through negotiation, mediation and, if need be, through recourse to the International Court of Justice.

As regards the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, our consistent position has been that the territorial integrity of Iraq must be preserved and that the suffering of its people should be alleviated. Iraq must implement in full all relevant Security Council resolutions. The State of Qatar, through a statement by its Council of Ministers, expressed satisfaction with regard to the positive statement by the Security Council concerning Iraq's recognition of Kuwait's sovereignty, independence and international borders. Qatar welcomed the statement as a significant positive step towards normalization of the situation in the region and as a preparatory step towards alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The Council of Ministers, in its statement, commended the positive role played by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in eliminating hotbeds of tension and conflict in the world. Those efforts were clearly seen in our region in the demarcation of the international borders between Iraq and Kuwait in accordance with resolution 833 (1993) and other relevant Security Council resolutions.

As the Assembly considers the situation in the Middle East, we must commend our Organization for the serious and sincere role it has played in dealing with the problem of the Middle East, which has been on the General Assembly's agenda since the inception of the United Nations. The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council in this respect have laid the foundations of the Middle East peace process and have contributed to the maintenance of peace in the region. We all know that the first peace-keeping operation undertaken by the United Nations was in the Middle East, and that the United Nations observers still monitor the truce, disengagement and peace accords reached on the borders between Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Israel.

Since the beginning of the peace process, the United Nations has played an active part, especially in multilateral negotiations, on regional issues. The Organization has set up working groups on every one of those issues. We commend in particular the effective role of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and commend his efforts and good offices in support of the peace process on all tracks.

In spite of all obstacles, set backs and attempts at undermining the Middle East peace process, we still hope that the international community will ensure the success of the process and the achievement of the goal of

establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Our optimism is strengthened by the clear political will demonstrated by all parties to continue to move forward towards the peace that the whole region aspires after in order for its States and peoples to live in peace, security, justice and prosperity. Who is to tell evil that good will vanquish it and who is to tell injustice that the righteous will triumph?

Mr. Chong-Ha Yoo (Republic of Korea): Over the past 45 years, the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict has been at the core of the troubles in the Middle East and the source of endless human suffering and numerous armed conflicts. However, with the remarkable progress achieved during the past year, a beacon of hope radiates across the region. The signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area on 4 May 1994, the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities on 29 August 1994, and the Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan on 26 October 1994 signalled to the world that genuine peace in the region might be within grasp for the first time in decades.

The Republic of Korea sincerely welcomes the advances made thus far and remains strongly supportive of the efforts to secure a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict based upon Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We should like to pay tribute to King Hussein bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, President Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, whose exemplary leadership and courageous tenacity have led their countries to the door of a future built on peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

We should not, however, lose sight of the fact that these achievements mark only the beginning of a long and arduous journey for peace in the Middle East. As we are well aware, the euphoria generated by recent events has been dampened not only by deep skepticism but also by gross acts of violence and bloodshed. The highly deplorable acts of violence over the past months have exposed the very fragile nature of the peace settlement. Given the profound obstacles which stand in the path of peace, it is necessary to give further impetus to the Palestinian track to ensure that it does not lag behind the pace of the peace process.

The success of the peace process depends heavily on the establishment of a sound political and economic base. Therefore, the need for support by the United Nations and the international community to assist the Palestinian people in the difficult task of rebuilding their society has never been more crucial. Following the Washington Conference of 1 October 1993, the Government of the Republic of Korea decided to offer $12 million for the rehabilitation projects of the Palestinian people for the period from 1994 to 1998.

In order for peace to be firmly rooted in the Middle East, it is also important that progress be achieved on the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks. Unless these inseparable aspects of the equation are adequately addressed, the peace in the region will continue to be fragile.

The Government of the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the maintenance of Lebanon's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty, and stresses the importance of implementing Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We fully support the efforts of the Lebanese Government to expand its control and authority throughout the entire Lebanese territory. My delegation urges all parties to continue working together in a spirit of compromise in order to make further progress in the negotiations and to give impetus to the Middle East peace process for the amicable resolution of the problem, including the recovery of the occupied territories.

History teaches us that the signing of an agreement does not necessarily result in peace. Economic stability is still one of the most essential preconditions for true peace.

Although the Middle East is rich in both human and natural resources, what is notably insufficient is confidence in the economic viability of the area. In this regard, the Casablanca summit held last October marked the beginning of a new phase for the Middle East. The momentum created by the Casablanca summit must be accelerated, and the international community should make firm commitments to strengthening this crucial aspect of the peace process.

Fully recognizing the pressing need to bolster economic and social growth in the region, the Republic of Korea has built up close political and economic ties with the Middle Eastern countries. Its trade volume with the region continues to grow, and the Korean Government is encouraging its business community actively to increase direct investment in the region. Like many other countries, the Republic of Korea is fully prepared and will continue to take an active part in the economic development of the Middle East.

After many decades of suffering and struggle, the Middle East now has the chance not only to resolve its long-standing strife, but also to serve as an inspiration to other troubled regions in the settlement of their ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts. The Middle East States, with the support of the international community, must seize the historic opportunity before them to secure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. My delegation reaffirms the Republic of Korea's commitment to and support of those countries in their resolve to take on the difficult tasks which lie ahead in fulfilment of this goal.

Mr. Graf zu Rantzau (Germany): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on 13 September 1993 greatly increased the momentum of the Middle East peace process.

The progress achieved since that date has not been limited to the Israeli-Palestinian track. Just one month ago, on 26 October, Israel and Jordan signed a Peace Treaty that opens a new chapter in the relations between those two countries. Within only a few months they had ended a state of war and laid out the foundations for comprehensive cooperation in all sectors. This not only will benefit the Israeli and Jordanian peoples but could become a model for cooperation in that region.

We call on all parties concerned to take the necessary steps to accelerate the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. We reaffirm our commitment to Security Council resolution 425 (1978) as a basis of the settlement of the Lebanese question.

The peace process has become irreversible. There is no alternative. We furthermore call upon those that are still on the outside to give up their opposition and participate in the process just as courageously as in the reconciliation of the peoples.

The Middle East is in need of a new impetus to its economic development. Improving the political situation will help build trust in the economy and thus enhance the prospects for regional and national economic growth. The Casablanca conference, which took place just one month ago, opened yet another chapter in the peace process. It provided new perspectives for regional economic cooperation by bringing together the public and private sectors in a joint forum. To promote intra-regional trade in goods and services, it is necessary to create the basic economic conditions. All steps that do away with outmoded trade restrictions are positive contributions to that end. In this context, we welcome the recent decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council with respect to the boycott against Israel, and in this context call upon the Arab League to lift the boycott completely and as soon as possible.

The European Union and its member States are willing to make their contribution to the peace process. They support the peace process in political, economic and financial terms. For 1993, the Union pledged 90 million ECUs for the Palestinian territories, and a total of 500 million ECUs for the period from 1994 to 1998.

In addition to those funds for the Palestinians, the European Union has earmarked for regional projects, within the framework of its horizontal Mediterranean policy, 1.8 billion ECUs in loans from the European Investment Bank. Under this programme it is also possible to promote projects in those States involved in the peace process that aim at higher regional integration.

The multilateral working groups within the Middle East peace process play an important and future-oriented role with respect to regional cooperation. The working group on regional economic development, in which the European Union is particularly involved, has prepared a number of comprehensive studies for the economic development of the region. These studies are a suitable basis for the reconstruction of the countries involved.

In addition, the European Union is also ready to assist in setting up new structures of regional cooperation. Based on its extensive experience with European integration and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), the European Union could provide its partners south of the Mediterranean, if they so wish, with rich expertise.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union has already started to strengthen its relations with the countries of the region. On the basis of a strategy paper prepared by the European Commission, the European Council in Essen will examine the possibilities of intensifying the European Union's Mediterranean policy.

Closer ties with its Mediterranean neighbours is an important goal of the European Union. Peace, stability, security and sustained economic development of the region are of great importance to Europe.

Mr. Keating (New Zealand): Over the last year we have seen the hopes and goals that are embodied in the Middle East peace process beginning to be transformed into tangible achievements. For the first time there is a Palestinian Authority in Gaza and in Jericho. Palestinian responsibility for important areas of administration is being extended to the rest of the West Bank. Negotiations on early elections are under way. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel have signed a Treaty of Peace. These are courageous advances. They represent a turning-point in history. New Zealand congratulates the leaders and the people of Israel, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

We also congratulate those who have supported and sustained the momentum of peace. Among them is the Government of the United States, whose patient diplomacy has facilitated the series of agreements reached in the last two years. The Governments of Norway and Egypt have also made vital contributions. The efforts of the international community will continue to provide both indispensable support to the negotiating process and the means to translate its achievements into a daily reality for the peoples of the region.

Peace between Israel and Syria, and between Israel and Lebanon, is crucial to a comprehensive settlement. Recent high-level contacts with Syria have renewed our hopes for early progress towards substantive negotiations. Without reconciliation between Israel and Syria, the people of the region will be denied the just and lasting peace to which they have aspired for so long and which is their right.

The negotiations with Lebanon will also be vital. The settlement must reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The cycle of violence in southern Lebanon must be broken. The Lebanese people have known great suffering and conflict during many years of war. Serious divisions remain. Their resolution should be helped by the achievement of peace in the region.

Other positive actions are being taken by countries in the region to support the movement towards peace and greater prosperity for its peoples. In particular we congratulate King Hassan II and Morocco on hosting the recent Casablanca Economic Summit. This was an unprecedented gathering of business and Government leaders from throughout the region and the world. Such initiatives help to set a positive design for the future. The building of personal and commercial links will help to transform peace between Governments into peace between peoples. In this context we welcome also the decision by the Gulf Cooperation Council States to set a new path in developing their economic and commercial relations with Israel.

Those who reject peace can offer no answer but continued violence and lost opportunities. From Hebron, Afula and Tel Aviv to Buenos Aires and London, the last year has seen despicable and cowardly acts against innocent civilians. These acts were designed to erode the political will to carry on with the peace process. They are contrary to all that the United Nations stands for. Those responsible pit themselves against the wishes and standards of the international community.

As we commiserate with the victims of terrorism, we commend the restraint of leaders in the region who have maintained their vision and their commitment to the peace process. By their perseverance in these moments of tragedy, Israel and the Palestinians, in particular, have demonstrated that theirs is truly the peace of the brave.

The recent violence in Gaza is born, we believe, of frustration and deprivation. It threatens to reverse the hard-won political gains of the Palestinian people. Restraint and a turning away from extremist action are essential. But we know the patience of Palestinians has been stretched to breaking-point. If they are to continue to support the peace process, the Palestinian people must begin to see tangible improvements in their daily lives, and soon.

In particular, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza must take part in the early holding of free and fair elections which are their right. Adequate housing, water and schooling must be assured. The international community has pledged large-scale financial assistance to support self-rule. But if the aid pledged is to be useful, it must be delivered in a timely fashion, and, once delivered, used effectively and for clear and accountable purposes.

Israel and the Palestinians have overcome formidable obstacles. Yet the most difficult and divisive issues are still to be addressed. The Declaration of Principles and the Gaza/Jericho accord set a clear timetable for the beginning and conclusion of the

negotiations towards permanent status. It is vital that these extremely sensitive negotiations take place against a background of continuing and satisfactory progress. Only that will help to give both parties the further confidence needed to make the political decisions that will achieve a lasting accommodation.

The Declaration of Principles and the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty have given body to the principles of security and self-determination set out in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). All these instruments have New Zealand's full support.

Against the background of real political progress, we should not lose sight of the fact that peace will have meaning only if it enters people's daily lives. It is in that setting that we would like to pay tribute, as new institutions are being established, to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA's work has always been remarkable but we want to commend in particular its timely and effective Peace Implementation Programme. New Zealand will continue to give UNRWA its tangible support. We were glad of the opportunity to reaffirm this commitment to UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr. Ilter Turkmen, during his visit to New Zealand last month.

We believe that there is an urgent need to enhance the capacity of the United Nations and other agencies to cooperate effectively to meet the needs of Palestinians in the occupied territories, and in this context we welcome the Secretary-General's recent appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories.

It is our hope that this may also be a time of new beginnings elsewhere in the region. In particular, we refer to Iraq. We welcome Iraq's formal recognition on 10 November 1994 of the sovereignty of Kuwait and the United Nations demarcated border, in accordance with Security Council resolution 833 (1993). This is an important step forward. We also acknowledge the Iraqi Government's acceptance last year of its obligations under Security Council resolution 715 (1991), and its enhanced cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission's work on its weapons of mass destruction programmes, and in particular with long-term monitoring and verification. We look to Iraq to continue this cooperation, and to meet the other requirements set out in Security Council resolutions.

Had it not been for Iraq's threatening moves towards Kuwait in October, we believe that in the light of these positive developments the international community would by now have reached a position of greater confidence that Iraq's intentions towards its neighbours are peaceful. The willingness to develop serious military confidence-building measures with neighbouring States offers Iraq the scope for it to provide evidence of its peaceful intentions, and we look to Iraq to agree to concrete measures to this end.

Looking at the region as a whole, we see that the massive and destabilizing trade in lethal arms saps confidence. It undermines efforts to assure peace and security and to pursue open political dialogue. The Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security, which is part of the multilateral track of the peace process, is, we believe, an important forum for confidence-building dialogue, and we continue to support it and the other tracks of the multilateral negotiations. Yet movement in the multilateral negotiations must be grounded in real progress at the political level between the parties directly engaged. We have witnessed dramatic progress over this last year, and we say to the region's partners in peace that New Zealand offers its continuing encouragement and support.

Mr. Butler (Australia): The Assembly takes up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East at a critical time for the Middle East peace process.

The succession of historic agreements, which began with the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington on 13 September 1993, has laid the foundations for a comprehensive settlement to a dispute which has bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours for so long, depriving the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity.

We applaud the progress which has been made to date, the vision of those responsible for taking the hard decisions, and the untiring efforts of those who have played crucial roles, whether in facilitating early contacts or helping to bridge differences in negotiations.

Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the Middle East and has been concerned for many years at the implications for global security of conflict in the region.

Australia's long-standing policy in this area is based on two main premises: first, a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries; and, secondly, recognition of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for, and acknowledgment of, the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries.

But, while we are optimistic that a series of important first steps has been taken on the road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, we must not become complacent about the remainder of the journey.

Continuing acts of violence and terrorism by extremist groups constitute a grave danger to the peace process, and threaten to drive the Middle East back into conflict and suffering.

The peace process is the only realistic path towards long-term regional security and cooperation. But the political achievements must be reinforced by the realization of economic benefits.

Not only must the arguments and violent actions of extremists on both sides be countered in a vigilant and balanced way, but the general population must be able to see quickly the tangible benefits to their daily lives deriving from the new arrangements.

Thus it is imperative not only that the parties to the agreements maintain their commitment and expedite the remaining processes of negotiation and implementation — most immediately, agreement on the framework and terms for Palestinian elections — but also that the international community ensure speedy and constant economic and political support for the new dispensation.

In recognition of the importance of providing international economic support and practical assistance to the new Palestinian Administration, Australia has committed $A15 million over three years in connection with the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho Accord. These funds will be spent principally on development activities crucial to the success of the new Palestinian Administration, such as income-generation, training, health, sanitation and water resources. The allocation also includes a $A1.4 million package to assist the Palestinian Authority to meet some of its more immediate start-up costs.

We urge others in the international community also to respond quickly, generously, practically and flexibly to the needs of the new Palestinian Administration.

Australia has been pleased to participate in the important, practically-orientated multilateral arm of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the Working Groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise, and where we judge we will be able to make a significant and needed contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

In April 1995 Australia will host a workshop on rainfall enhancement, which we hope will assist water managers and scientists to determine whether cloud-seeding holds the potential to enhance water availability in the countries of the Middle East. Australia has also provided practical input to the regional Working Group on arms control and regional security, in particular through ideas relating to a regional conflict-prevention centre.

Australia calls on all States in the region to participate fully in the multilateral phase of the peace process, which provides critical support to the bilateral talks by establishing the ground work for, and demonstrating what can be done through, regional cooperation.

In this context, we warmly welcomed the convening by His Majesty King Hassan of Morocco in Casablanca this past October of the Middle East/North Africa summit on economic cooperation. We believe the summit and the follow-up to it will greatly assist in the establishment of a blueprint for economic cooperation and regional development in the Middle East.

Australia welcomed the signing and ratification, during the current session of the General Assembly, of a Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel. We urge the speedy conclusion of treaties between Israel and Syria and Lebanon.

We continue to be encouraged by the progress made in Lebanon towards national reconciliation. We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces which compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and we believe the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon will enhance Lebanon's sovereignty.

Australia believes that, given the recent positive developments, it is in the best interests of further progress in the negotiations that all parties adopt policies that serve to build confidence and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Obdurate policies of the past would only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace. We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility towards Israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, may restrict the development of the new Palestinian administration. Australia welcomes the recent moves by a number of Arab States to wind back the boycott and calls on all members of the Arab League to pursue this path as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all States of the Middle East that have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their obligations thereunder.

Australia continues fully to support the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the continuing task of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and investigating the Iraqi weapons programmes.

We were dismayed by the recent movement of Iraqi forces close to the border with Kuwait and strongly support Security Council resolution 949 (1994), adopted in response to that provocation. We were pleased by the subsequent withdrawal of Iraqi forces to their original positions and the formal recognition of Kuwait by Iraq earlier this month. This is a step in the right direction and indicates, we hope, a realization by Iraq that cooperation with the Security Council and the United Nations Special Commission and compliance with all of Iraq's obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions — not threats of military action against Kuwait — are the only ways to achieve the lifting of sanctions.

Australia is particularly concerned about the situation of civilian groups in Iraq and calls on the Iraqi Government to ensure that all of its citizens enjoy equal human and political rights, in line with Security Council resolution 688 (1991).

Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government. Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions that would allow it to resume oil exports, so that the hardships that are evident among the civilian population can be addressed.

Australia also supports the Security Council's actions on Libya. We again urge Libya to comply fully with the Council's requirements, as set out in its resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993).

In conclusion, the situation in the Middle East has been a preoccupation of the General Assembly virtually since the birth of the United Nations. At times, it has seemed the most acute and intractable of regional conflicts threatening international peace and security. It is appropriate and heartening that, as the United Nations approaches its fiftieth year, a peace process is in train which, with international support and good faith and political will on the part of those directly involved, allows us to contemplate a new environment in the Middle East - an environment in which Arabs and Israelis can live together in peace, in cooperation and in well-being.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Yesterday, I had the opportunity to elaborate on the question of Palestine, which is the core and essence of the Middle East problem. The practices and policies of the occupying Zionist regime against the Palestinian people and other Muslim countries have constituted the main source of instability, violence and distrust in the region during the last four decades.

The Zionist regime does not confine itself to occupying the Holy Land of Palestine and violating the basic human rights of Palestinians. The Golan Heights and southern Lebanon continue to be under Israeli occupation. Moreover, the Palestinian and other Arab peoples in the occupied territories face daily aggressive practices by the occupying forces, and the people of

southern Lebanon are the target of assassination and air strikes. Israel continues to perpetrate acts of terrorism that include the killing and torturing of Palestinians, the massacre of worshippers, the kidnapping of Lebanese citizens and the bombing of civilian areas in Lebanon.

These crimes and the repeated acts of aggression committed by Israel have met with the legitimate resistance of the people in the occupied territories and southern Lebanon. Not surprisingly, they have been labelled fanatics, radicals, fundamentalists and terrorists. It is ironic that the occupying regime not only expects the general surrender and submission of all the peoples and groups in the occupied lands but also wishes to silence any voice raised in moral support of the Palestinian cause, which reveals that regime's true intention of perpetuating its oppression and subjugation of the Palestinian people — now under the pretext of a peace process. The Zionist regime will spare no effort, however foul, indecent and slanderous, to attack those who oppose their aggressive policies and the occupation.

Israel's real and ultimate objective has been and continues to be the perpetuation of its occupation. Today, under the disguise of the peace process, this very policy is being pursued through the repression of Muslims and other opponents of the illegal and aggressive Israeli occupation. In our view, the current process lacks realism and will not lead to real and lasting peace. The return of peace and stability to the Middle East will depend as much on the liberation of the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon as on the full realization of all rights of the people of Palestine, the return of all Palestinian refugees and the liberation of all occupied territories.

The Zionist regime has capitalized extensively on the introduction of an artificial threat to our region for the purpose of diverting the attention of the international community from the question of Palestine. It is a well established fact that Israel orchestrates a campaign of misinformation and propaganda against others and tries to foster discord and distrust among States and peoples in the region.

Israel's nuclear threat is another source of grave concern in the Middle East region. The Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his statement during the General Assembly's general debate earlier in this session, said:

> "Israel's nuclear programme has exacerbated the arms race in the region and has forced others within the area to turn to more advanced conventional weaponry. Some States in the region have made their accession to a number of disarmament treaties conditional upon Israel's acceptance of international regimes established to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 5th meeting, p. 39)*

The importance of regional disarmament has always been emphasized by the Islamic Republic of Iran. I should like to reiterate once more our commitment to the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. We shall support any genuine, comprehensive and non-discriminatory initiative to establish such a zone so that the International Atomic Energy Agency can expand its verification system to cover all nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

In addition to Israel's continuous threats, interference by foreign Governments in the affairs of regional States has led to negative perceptions in the region. This has impeded serious dialogue and the consideration of constructive suggestions for the creation of peace, stability and security in some subregions of the Middle East, such as the Persian Gulf.

The Islamic republic of Iran, which is the country with the longest shore line along the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, has spared no effort to promote and maintain peace and security in the area. We have repeatedly called for the creation of a forum, with the participation of the Persian Gulf countries, to consider and develop confidence-building measures that are compatible with the requirements of the region, taking into account the principles of respect for internationally recognized borders, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of others. We shall undoubtedly continue our efforts to enhance peace and security in the area and to promote the culture of regional self-confidence.

Mr. Belyaev (Belarus) *(interpretation from Russian)*: More than a year has passed since the historic handshake between the leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which brought a totally new dimension to the situation in the Middle East. Traditional stereotypes have been shattered, and there has been a radical change in the deeply rooted images of the enemy that both sides created over the decades of this apparently utterly unresolvable conflict. Confrontation is yielding to

partnership, and this is making an extraordinarily positive impact not only on the Israelis and the Palestinians and on the Middle East region but on the international community as a whole.

The Republic of Belarus welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which is the very important first step towards the establishment of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Our delegation expresses its full support for the patient and fruitful efforts of the sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference on the Middle East — the Russian Federation and the United States. We are also grateful for the great diplomatic skills of Norway, which played a significant part in advancing the initial success of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

The achievement of a number of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization — including the accord of 4 May 1994 establishing Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho and the agreement of 24 August 1994 concerning the expansion of autonomy on the West Bank of the Jordan — gives concrete form to the spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation that is becoming a decisive factor in the development of Israeli-Palestinian relations.

With the signing of these documents, the Arab people of Palestine, for the first time since the creation of the United Nations, sees a real possibility of beginning to enjoy its inalienable right to self-determination, its right to elect an authoritative organ of State power, its right to develop independently the spheres of education, health, tourism, social security and taxation, and its right to security guaranteed by a national police force.

In the view of our delegation, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, the establishment of a joint Israeli-Palestinian coordinating committee to secure cooperation in the area of civilian government and the development of the banking system, agriculture and industry along Palestinian lines are making a significant contribution to the strengthening of mutual trust between Israel and the autonomous Palestinian authority.

Nevertheless, there is still a wide range of problems and contradictions to be resolved. If the long-standing hopes for peace and justice are to be fulfilled, the parties to the negotiations must work within the peace process drawn up in Madrid and on the basis of implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

The support of the United Nations and the international community is very important for reinforcing the success that has been achieved. In our view, there is an urgent need to render the Palestinian people assistance in resolving those issues linked with effective organization of self-government, the restoration and development of the infrastructures and the establishment of machinery for its future economic activity.

Here Belarus wishes to express its appreciation for the activities of the working groups within the framework of the so-called multilateral tracks. We also welcome the establishment of the United Nations contact group for support of the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

A lasting peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive. To ensure genuine stability in the region, all parties to this extended conflict, especially Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, need to contribute to a settlement. The Republic of Belarus welcomes the signing on 26 October 1994 of the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan and believes that it is a consolidating factor for a peaceful settlement in this hotbed of tension and an exemplary model for other countries of the region. The Republic of Belarus also hopes that Israel and Syria will be able to arrive at a *rapprochement* of their positions and find common ground for peace.

We are following hopefully the improvements in the situation in Lebanon, though stability there remains fragile because the long-awaited comprehensive settlement has still not been reached. Our delegation is in favour of the full restoration of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The Republic of Belarus takes a positive view of the decision of the Revolutionary Command Council and the National Assembly of Iraq concerning official recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Kuwait and of the international border between the two States. We wish to express our hope for a practical implementation of this decision in the very near future.

The delegation of the Republic of Belarus believes that the active participation of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the Secretary-General,

in the present stage of the process of a Middle East settlement is an essential ingredient for achieving success. We highly value the efforts of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon for the maintenance of peace in the region. The Republic of Belarus welcomes the activity of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which, within the bounds of its resources, is doing all in its power to render comprehensive assistance to the refugees.

In view of the spirit of good will and determination demonstrated recently, the Middle East can become the basis for a peaceful and lasting international order replacing the era of global confrontation. The international community bears the responsibility for fully advancing this process. The Republic of Belarus is ready to cooperate actively in the achievement, by civilized means, of a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): At the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the delegation of Brazil welcomed the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization and expressed the hope that it would pave the way for further significant transformations in the Middle East.

The period that has elapsed since then has been marked by important achievements that are turning hopes into realities. The Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May last and the Agreement on early empowerment of 29 August last have enabled the setting up of the Palestinian Authority, a first and fundamental step towards the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to self-determination and nationhood.

The recent Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel augurs well for the remaining tracks of the direct negotiations. It is our expectation that progress will soon be achieved regarding the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Nevertheless, my Government is concerned at the situation in Lebanon. The efforts conducted the by Lebanese Government with a view to rebuilding the State and fostering national reconciliation deserve strong support. Accordingly, the international community should reaffirm its commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders, as stated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The progress achieved towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East has been challenged by opponents of the Declaration of Principles. The adoption of Security Council resolution 904 (1994), in the aftermath of the massacre in the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron, helped to defuse a particularly destabilizing blow to the peace process. It should be recalled that lives have been claimed by outrageous eruptions of violence not only in the Middle East but also in other regions, including our own. We reiterate, in this respect, our condemnation of the abhorrent attack against the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina in Buenos Aires.

We encourage the leaders on all sides to persevere in their efforts for a peaceful solution despite the attempts to derail the peace process. The resort to violence and subsequent retaliation seek only to perpetuate the cycle of violence and hatred that has plagued the region in the past. Lessons could be drawn from the peaceful settlement of the question of South Africa, one of the most intractable situations of the post-war period, which was achieved through the patient diplomatic and political efforts of all concerned.

The United Nations has been actively involved in the Middle East crisis, not only through peace-keeping operations and relevant diplomatic initiatives but also through programmes of economic, social and humanitarian assistance. My delegation notes with satisfaction the continuing participation of the United Nations in the multilateral segment of the talks between the Israeli and Arab parties. I wish to stress in particular the important role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, whose peace implementation programme is helping to promote an environment conducive to the strengthening of the peace process through the socio-economic rehabilitation of the occupied territories. We should also mention the creation of the post of Special Coordinator, who is entrusted with ensuring effective coordination of the Organization's efforts in the region.

The promotion of economic development and improvement of the quality of life in the occupied territories are crucial for the creation of the necessary conditions to ensure a smooth implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The development of economic ties is instrumental in building confidence between the Palestinian and Israeli communities. A greater

communality of interests will surely assist in moving the peace process forward.

The unswerving support of the international community is crucially important to maintain the momentum in the peace process. The donors' conference held in Washington and the Economic Summit convened in Casablanca stand out, in this context, as significant initiatives. The newly created Palestinian Authority will require all possible support to face the formidable task of institution-building ahead of it. We have taken note with satisfaction that steps are already being taken in that direction.

Brazil will continue to pay close attention to the unfolding of events in the Middle East. We stand ready to participate in international efforts, particularly those supported by the United Nations, in the fields of technical and scientific cooperation and those that could benefit from the dynamism and creativity of the private sector.

Finally, I should stress that the sponsors of the draft resolutions submitted under various agenda items relating to the Middle East have continued to introduce improvements in their texts with a view to updating and harmonizing them with the new political atmosphere in the region. These signs are a welcome indication that the times of strife are finally coming to an end and giving way to an era of cooperation and understanding among all peoples in the Middle East.

Mr. Lian (Norway): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and my own country, Norway.

The past year has seen great achievements, as well as temporary set-backs, in the Middle East peace process. The implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements is moving steadily forward, although behind schedule. A Palestinian Authority has been set up in Gaza and Jericho in the space of a few months under the leadership of Chairman Yasser Arafat. Close to 1 million Palestinians are now able to take responsibility for their own lives. A Palestinian police force of more than 9,000 men has been set up and is being funded under difficult circumstances. With the recent agreements on early empowerment, the Palestinians will now be responsible for education, health care, social affairs, taxation and tourism in the rest of the West Bank, in addition to Jericho and Gaza. These are no minor achievements.

The leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) deserve our praise for their outstanding courage and commitment to move ahead with the peace process despite internal opposition and violent attempts to derail that process. The parties have clearly demonstrated that there can be no going back to the old days of conflict and confrontation. The Nordic countries condemn those forces that are trying to destroy the peace process through violence and terror. We must not let them succeed.

We welcome the many signs of normalization in the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours. On 26 October this year Prime Minister Rabin and His Majesty King Hussein signed a historic peace agreement ending the 46-year-old state of war between Israel and Jordan and paving the way now for the establishment of diplomatic relations between those two countries. This represents a major step towards a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The beginning of normalization between Israel and Morocco and Tunisia are other welcome signs, as is the announcement of the Gulf States to consider easing the Arab boycott of Israel.

The Nordic countries hope that the bilateral talks between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon will be inspired by these positive developments and that they will soon lead to concrete results towards peace in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The mere fact that the economic summit in Casablanca could take place at all clearly demonstrates that a profound change of climate has occurred in the Middle East. New possibilities for regional cooperation have opened up, which, in turn, should inspire further progress in the peace process. The Nordic countries welcome the emergence of such efforts with a view to regional cooperation, and we look forward to their further development.

These events entail obligations and responsibilities for the international community. Through the actions of each of us we must foster the new climate of cooperation in the Middle East by mobilizing the financial resources needed to secure peace and to promote economic development. A good start was made at the donors' conference in Washington on 1 October last year, where pledges of over $2 billion were made to assist the Palestinians. The problem is, however, that only a minor part of those pledges have been disbursed. Most donors

have chosen to focus on medium- and long-term development projects that take time to materialize.

As we see it, the time has now come to do first things first. The recent riots in Gaza testify to the deteriorating economic situation in the Palestinian self-rule areas. Last year's optimism and hopes of a better life have now given way to disappointment and political in-fighting on the Palestinian side. Border closures between Israel and Gaza have increased the already widespread unemployment in the Gaza Strip, and, in the absence of quick and visible improvements, the whole Middle East peace process could be in danger.

Therefore, our challenge now is clearly to mobilize international aid that can make a difference on the ground in Gaza and Jericho by improving living conditions for ordinary Palestinians, by creating employment and by instilling a sense of optimism about and belief in the future.

Donors must as a matter of urgency help to ensure that the Palestinian Authority has sufficient funds to finance start-up and recurrent costs for the coming months. This is especially true for the police force, for the early empowerment areas and for transitional projects to promote the rapid creation of jobs. The situation requires both a more speedy disbursement of pledges and greater flexibility in switching funds from long-term to short-term needs. If we fail to act rapidly on this, prospects for political stability and economic growth could be seriously undermined. At the same time, international aid for the improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinians can only be complementary to the efforts of the parties directly concerned.

Against this background, the Nordic countries welcome the fact that the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee held in Brussels on 29 and 30 November was able to bridge a substantial part of the Palestinian budget needs. We also welcome the fact that the meeting endorsed the understanding between the PLO and the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on Palestinian budget requirements and future donor assistance. This understanding should form a good basis for an accelerated pace and greater flexibility in the assistance efforts. However, despite these achievements, there remain great needs that have to be met. The meeting in Brussels thus discussed the need for taking decisive action to counter the sense of frustration and hopelessness that many Palestinians now feel, and it stressed the requirement for an all-out effort to accelerate the progress of the Palestinian development programme. Let me therefore again emphasize that how we react to this challenge can be decisive for the prospects of peace in the Middle East.

The Nordic countries highly appreciate the strong United Nations support of the peace process. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have for a long time given invaluable assistance to the Palestinians, and their activities will continue to be important. The appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Terje Rød Larsen, has underlined the commitment of the United Nations to further strengthen its role in the peace process. A strengthened United Nations role is highly welcomed by the Nordic countries.

It is important that the debates and resolutions of the General Assembly try to reflect the positive developments in the Middle East. We should therefore concentrate our efforts on solving practical problems and exploiting every possibility to enlarge the common ground. Norway has contributed in this respect by preparing and presenting a new draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the Palestinian Police Force". The Nordic countries hope that it will be adopted unanimously.

The Nordic countries would like to reaffirm their readiness to continue to play an active and balanced part in assisting the peace process in the Middle East. Peace and security are the prerequisites for economic development and prosperity — prosperity which a large portion of the population of the Middle East region has so far been unable to enjoy in spite of abundant natural and human resources. The challenges are great and the stakes are high. But so are the rewards, if the peace process can be successfully completed.

Mr. Stadthagen (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Our country believes that this is the time for reconciliation in the Middle East. We are convinced that the time has come to abandon the decades-old confrontation and transform the region into an oasis of peace in which tolerance, mutual respect, freedom, peaceful coexistence and economic and social development prevail. The time has come to take advantage of the positive developments on the world political scene.

At this historic juncture in the negotiations in the Middle East the parties to the conflict absolutely must continue their creative efforts to find the ways and means peacefully to achieve the long-coveted peace, not only for the Arab and Israeli peoples but for the entire international community. The role of those who have acted as facilitators, including the United States, Norway and Egypt, should also be recognized. Our country will continue to support all efforts made in that region in the systematic search for peace. We also support the approach that the General Assembly has constantly advocated — namely, that peace in the Middle East is indivisible and must be based on a broad and comprehensive solution to the problem.

The experience of Nicaragua, a country that has suffered the consequences of a decade-long political and military conflict, has convinced it that a peaceful and negotiated solution to the problems of the Middle East and flexibility must remain the bases of the negotiation process now under way in that region. They are the bases for the achievement of stability and respect for the human rights of all parties.

Our country has been following with great hope the developments in the peace process that began in Madrid in October 1991. The Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization is a historic agreement with great possibilities for the future. In our opinion, we can take great encouragement from the progress and success achieved in the implementation of these principles and in the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in Cairo on 4 May 1994. Nevertheless, further progress must be made.

We agree that the situation in Palestine has been the core of the controversy in the Middle East. A solution to the situation in that region cannot be found without a lasting agreement on the problem of the Palestinian people. Although progress has been made, we are concerned at what we read in the Secretary-General's reports on the situation, *inter alia*, on the economic difficulties facing these territories.

Our delegation recognizes that there is an urgent need for bilateral and multilateral assistance for the reconstruction and development of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. This will be a decisive factor in the success of the peace process. The international community as a whole must respond concretely — not with promises but with deeds — in order to strengthen the transition process in Palestine through sustained economic and technical cooperation that will make it possible to consolidate the institutions and generate productive employment, so that the embryonic peace can be buttressed by tangible results in the shortest possible time.

We welcome with great satisfaction the signing of the Peace Treaty between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan on 26 October 1994. With the signing of these agreements, the state of war between Jordan and Israel was brought to an end. The historic statements made for the first time by an Arab leader and an Israeli leader before the United States Congress marked a new stage in the relations between those two countries since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

We firmly believe that the broad political will shown by the representatives of Israel, Palestine and Jordan in the adoption of these historic agreements must continue to be shown in order to find a definitive solution to the outstanding problems in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the same context of promoting peace, my delegation hopes that the talks between Israel and Syria will continue, in a spirit of flexibility and realism, so that agreements that both parties find reasonable can be reached, with a view to consolidating the peace process that began in October 1991 in Madrid.

We welcome also the progress towards peace and cooperation that has been achieved between Israel and other Arab States, in particular, the agreements with Morocco of September 1994 and those with Tunisia of October 1994. The step taken by the Gulf States to put an end to the secondary and tertiary terms of the embargo, as well as the economic summit, recently organized in Casablanca, Morocco, by King Hassan II, also rank as important initiatives for the promotion of the confidence that can lead to lasting peace in the Middle East.

The problems of the Middle East are multi-faceted. They have not only political but also military, legal, humanitarian, religious and historic aspects. Hence, the path towards a lasting, just and comprehensive peace has become more difficult. This process requires not only patience but also sustained efforts to eliminate all the barriers, the psychological barriers in particular, that still obstruct the peace process. None the less, we are certain that the Arab and Israeli leaders will be able to wisely guide their efforts to find a definitive solution to the problems of the Middle East.

The Government of Nicaragua, which is promoting a broad process of national reconciliation, hopes that further progress will be made in the talks among all the parties. Serious and transparent dialogue is the best way to forget once and for all a history of hatred and discord that has lasted for generations. This is the time for reconciliation, the time to begin, in peace, a new era of prosperity and stability in the Middle East. A lasting solution to the conflict in that region will be one of the greatest contributions to the building of a new international order that mankind demands today.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): One representative has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the second intervention, and that delegations shall make their statements from their seats.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In his statement this morning, the representative of Australia urged Libya to comply fully with Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). This gives the impression that Libya has made no response to those resolutions. My delegation wishes to correct the statement of the representative of Australia, who appears to be unaware of Libya's actions in compliance with those resolutions.

Libya has responded to those Security Council resolutions. Libya has condemned international terrorism in all its forms and has declared its readiness to cooperate in all international efforts to eliminate that phenomenon. Libya has proposed the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to consider terrorism in all its forms, including State terrorism, of which Libya has been a victim.

In its response to the Security Council resolutions, Libya has shown sufficient flexibility, and has offered several proposals regarding the fair and impartial trial of the two persons suspected of having a relation with the Pan Am 103 incident. Although there has been no response on the part of those concerned to those proposals, which were consonant with international law, Libya has continued to cooperate and has demonstrated continuous readiness to solve this problem and to end the unjust sanctions imposed on the Libyan people.

The most recent proposal accepted in this respect was that of the League of Arab States: that the suspects be tried, under Scottish law, at the headquarters of the International Court of Justice. Libya went even further in stating that it had no objection to the two suspects placing themselves in the hands of the League of Arab States until agreement is reached on the time and venue of the trial.

This makes clear the steps taken by Libya in response to Security Council resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993). We hope the Australian delegation will take note of these facts, which have been communicated to the United Nations and duly circulated in official documents of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.